

This is an official

# CDC Health Advisory

Distributed via the South Carolina Health Alert Network  
March 3, 2008, 9:30 EST

## CDC Alert on Ricin

### Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working collaboratively with the Southern Nevada Health District's Environmental Health Division, the FBI, and other public health and law enforcement agencies to investigate a case of possible ricin exposure in Las Vegas. Preliminary results of environmental testing at laboratories in Nevada have tested positive for ricin. Ricin is a potent biologic toxin that is derived from castor beans.

### Clinical Description for Ricin Exposure by Ingestion

Ingestion of ricin typically leads to profuse vomiting and diarrhea, which might be bloody, followed by hypovolemic shock and multisystem organ dysfunction. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms, fever, myalgia, and arthralgia might also be reported.

### Clinical Description for Ricin Exposure by Inhalation

Inhalation of ricin typically leads to cough and respiratory distress followed by pulmonary edema, respiratory failure, and multisystem organ dysfunction. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms of fever, myalgia, and arthralgia might also be reported.

### Case Classification

- **Suspected:** A case in which a potentially exposed person is being evaluated by health-care workers or public health officials for poisoning by a particular chemical agent, but no specific credible threat exists.
- **Probable:** A clinically compatible case in which a high index of suspicion (credible threat or patient history regarding location and time) exists for ricin exposure, or an epidemiologic link exists between this case and a laboratory-confirmed case.
- **Confirmed:** A clinically compatible case in which laboratory tests have confirmed exposure. The case can be confirmed if laboratory testing was not performed because either a predominant amount of clinical and nonspecific laboratory evidence of a particular chemical was present or a 100% certainty of the etiology of the agent is known.

### Laboratory Testing for Ricin

Two types of laboratory testing are available for suspected ricin exposures:

- **Environmental:** Detection of ricin in environmental samples, as determined by CDC (for suspected exposures from the environment) or FDA (for suspected exposures from food or medication). Ricin can be detected qualitatively by time-resolved fluoroimmunoassay (TRFIA) and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in environmental specimens (e.g., filters, swabs, or wipes).
- **Biologic:** CDC can assess selected specimens on a provisional basis for urinary ricinine, an alkaloid in the castor bean plant. Urinary ricinine testing is the only clinical test for ricin exposure available at CDC.

### Additional Information

- More information about clinical descriptions, case classifications, and laboratory testing can be found at MMWR January 14, 2005 / 54(RR01); 1-24. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5401a1.htm>
- For additional information about ricin including signs, symptoms, and treatment, please visit CDC's website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/index.asp>, call 1-800-CDCINFO (TTY 888-232-6348), or email [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov).
- For additional clinical information see <http://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/hp.asp>.

## DHEC Contact Information for Reportable Diseases and Reporting Requirements

Reporting of patients with symptoms consistent with ricin poisoning is considered an "Immediately Reportable by Phone" condition in the current DHEC List of Reportable Conditions (i.e. "Any potential biological (to include toxins such as ricin)" chemical, or terrorist event). Healthcare providers are required to report suspected or confirmed cases to their Regional Public Health Offices, at the contact numbers listed below.

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

CDC requests that public health officials and clinicians who encounter patients with symptoms consistent with ricin poisoning report these cases to the CDC Emergency Operations Center, telephone 770-488-7100. The local poison control center (PCC) should also be contacted at 1-800-222-1222 to report cases. Medical personnel are available at PCCs to provide specific advice on treatment and management of ricin poisoning if needed.

### Regional Public Health Offices – 2008

Mail or call reports to the Epidemiology Office in each Public Health Region.

#### Region 1

##### **Anderson, Oconee**

220 McGee Road  
Anderson, SC 29625  
Phone: (864) 260-4358  
Fax: (864) 260-5623  
Nights / Weekends: 1-866-298-4442

##### **Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Saluda**

1736 S. Main Street  
Greenwood, SC 29646  
Phone: 1-888-218-5475  
Fax: (864) 942-3690  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-420-1915

#### Region 2

##### **Greenville, Pickens**

PO Box 2507  
200 University Ridge  
Greenville, SC 29602-2507  
Phone: (864) 282-4139  
Fax: (864) 282-4373  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-993-1186

##### **Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union**

PO Box 4217  
151 E. Wood Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29305-4217  
Phone: (864) 596-2227, x- 210  
Fax: (864) 596-3443  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-993-1186

#### Region 3

##### **Chester, Lancaster, York**

PO Box 817  
1833 Pageland Highway  
Lancaster, SC 29721  
Phone: (803) 286-9948  
Fax: (803) 286-5418  
Nights / Weekends: 1-866-867-3886

#### Region 3 (continued)

##### **Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland**

2000 Hampton Street  
Columbia, SC 29204  
Phone: (803) 576-2749  
Fax: (803) 576-2993  
Nights / Weekends: 1-888-554-9915

#### Region 4

##### **Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Sumter**

PO Box 1628  
105 North Magnolia Street  
Sumter, SC 29150  
Phone: (803) 773-5511  
Fax: (803) 775-9941  
Nights/Weekends: 1-877-831-4647

##### **Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, Marion**

145 E. Cheves Street  
Florence, SC 29506  
Phone: (843) 661-4830  
Fax: (843) 661-4859  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 660-8145

#### Region 5

##### **Bamberg, Calhoun, Orangeburg**

PO Box 1126  
1550 Carolina Avenue  
Orangeburg, SC 29116  
Phone: (803) 533-7199  
Fax: (803) 533-7134  
Nights / Weekends: (803) 954-8513

##### **Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell**

1680 Richland Avenue, W. Suite 40  
Aiken, SC 29801  
Phone: (803) 642-1618  
Fax: (803) 643-8386  
Nights / Weekends: (803) 827-8668 or  
1-800-614-1519

#### Region 6

##### **Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg**

1931 Industrial Park Road  
Conway, SC 29526-5482  
Phone: (843) 915-8804  
Fax: (843) 365-0085  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 381-6710

#### Region 7

##### **Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester**

4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600  
N. Charleston, SC 29405  
Phone: (843) 746-3860  
Fax: (843) 746-3851  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 219-8470

#### Region 8

##### **Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper**

219 S. Lemacks Street  
Walterboro, SC 29488  
Phone: (843) 549-1516, x-214  
Fax: (843) 549-6845  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-614-4698

#### DHEC Bureau of Disease Control

##### Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology

1751 Calhoun Street  
Box 101106  
Columbia, SC 29211  
Phone: (803) 898-0861  
Fax: (803) 898-0897  
Nights / Weekends: 1-888-847-0902



[www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.